



TRICARE Northwest

West Coast Conference A Mix Of Fun Learning and Networking

Chris Hober, TRICARE Northwest, OLA

The old saying, "laughter is the best medicine" was never so evident as at the recent West Coast TRICARE Conference held Aug. 15-17 at the Tacoma Sheraton Hotel. Comments from those who attended indicated that while the conference theme may have been "MHS Optimization - Population Health," it was really humor that carried each day of the three-region event.

Aside from some of the more entertaining presentations, networking was, not surprisingly, the other main theme of the conference. As the DoD TRICARE confer-

ence is attended by selected staff, this was the first opportunity for many to get together with their regional counterparts elsewhere and that fact was reflected in their comments. "Great to meet staff from other regions; "Loved a West Coast conference as opposed to regional;" and "It provided great networking and allowed us to hear a lot of lessons learned," were commonplace, with very few dissenters.

One of the lessons that everyone should have taken away from this conference is: if you are going to speak to a large group of people, the effective use of humor is the best

way to get your message across. Evidence Mike Meines ("Positive Selfishness" & "Making a Good First Impression") and Jim Pelley (Embrace Risk, Manage Change and Laugh Often"), who attendees pegged as their favorite speakers, respectively, at the conference. Both used jokes, funny scenarios and humorous anecdotes to make serious points, and were rewarded with both happy and informed attendees. Others garnering praise included Col. Robert Leitch, UK, (ret.) ("What Edward Link Did for Aviation..."), whose liberal use of humor was

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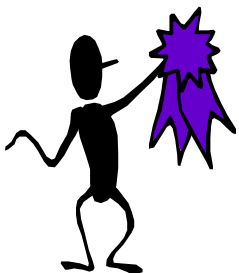
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USAF Surgeon General Recognizes Customer Satisfaction at 92nd MDG



Recently the 92nd MDG at Fairchild AFB was recognized as a leader in customer satisfaction. Lt. General

Carlton, USAF Surgeon General, noted the 92nd Medical Group was one of eight in the Air Force with exceptionally high customer loyalty. These standings were gleaned from DoD Customer Satisfaction Surveys completed by patients using these facilities. While mention-

ing the strategy of the Air Force Medical Service, Carlton said, "Customer service is, and will continue to be, the capstone of our enterprise". He went on to note the AFMS customer service priorities of Putting Customers First,

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West Coast Conference A Mix Of Fun Learning and Networking Cont'd

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just the right prescription when reminding us of how far we have come.

One should not get the impression, however, that the more serious thematic presentations were not important. They were and conferee comments reflected that fact: "Found demand management talk/ HCIL Line analysis excellent real information/ real potential in the optimization environment;" "Burma ("Data Quality is Not Just a Paper Drill") was awesome! Knows here stuff, knows her or-

ganization and provides tools to achieve goals;" "Management/ Appt. Analyzer a great session! It was informative, useful and applicable to any MTF setting."

In every area, from overall organization to individual take-aways, attendees gave the conference high marks, all ranging between 4 and 5 on a scale of 5. Those who enjoyed it the best, though, were probably those who followed this simple rule of thumb - Hear laughter? Go there!

Next year, TRICARE South-

ern California has offered to host the annual event.

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★
★ **Congratulations** ★
★ **to the 2000** ★
★ **Annual Conference Awardees** ★
★
★ TRICARE Northwest: ★
★ Larry Naehr - FHFS ★
★ TRICARE Golden Gate: ★
★ TSGT Alton Houston - NCOIC, ★
★ Ben Svcs/COTR 60th MG ★
★ TRICARE Southern California: ★
★ Data Warehouse Development ★
★ Team, Naval Medical Center San ★
★ Diego ★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

USAF Surgeon General Recognizes Customer Satisfaction at 92 MDG Cont'd

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Empowering Staff, Eliminating Crazy Makers and Reinforcing Basics.

Brigadier General Roudebush, AMC Command Surgeon, added his congratulations to Fairchild as one of three deserving facilities that are in AMC. These facilities are "examples of medical groups who are leading the drive toward customer focused organizations", said Roudebush. Col Dian Atkins added some specifics when asked what may have led to increased customer satisfaction at the 92nd Medical Group. She said, "We have limited resources. So, we have to ensure we prioritize our efforts well. We make our customers' priorities our priorities". Col Atkins went one to outline several re-

cent attempts to improve service to the customer. "We've changed procedures in our pharmacy to reduce wait times for all patients, we've installed a new telephone appointment system that reduces wait time and our initial efforts to optimize primary care have already begun to show positive impacts on the patient's access to care. We've also offered a focused effort to accomplish school/sports physicals for our enrollees and increased access to optometry by contracting with a civilian provider. Now that our satisfaction ratings back above 90%, we'd like to keep them there. That's why we will continue to implement programs to improve customer service". One program the 92nd MDG plans to start soon is the "Secret

Shopper" Program. Confidential patients will be asked to survey the performance of the 92nd MDG during their visit and report back to the customer service representative; the only one who knows their identity. Pharmacy wait times and access to primary care will be targeted for continued improvement by using automation and increasing support staff. If you have an idea to improve the 92nd MDG, call the customer relations manager, Ms Palmer, at 247-4543.



Continued Customer Service Excellence; Improved Readiness Key Issues For New Madigan Commander

Sharon D. Ayala, MAMC PAO

After serving less than a month as Madigan Army Medical Center's new Deputy Commander of Clinical Services, COL Tony Carter assumed command of the medical center during a change of command ceremony conducted last month.

Prior to his arrival at Madigan, COL Carter was assigned to The Office of the Surgeon General, where he served as the Senior Medical Staff Officer. Although he has not spent a great deal of time at Madigan, the Interim Commander is already impressed with the Madigan staff. "I think we have a great organization and lots of outstanding staff members," he said. "The staff here is dedicated to taking care of patients and doing their best to support whatever needs to be done."

That dedication, COL Carter said, is a clear indication of how customer focused the people at Madigan truly are. "It's clear to me that customer service is an important part of this organization that has been emphasized in the past. We must continue to emphasize that we're here to take care of patients and that we're concerned about our patients," he said. "The fact that we are here to serve customers and not vice versa is extremely important, and this staff recognizes that."

Changes in leadership are usually accompanied with uncertainty and stress. COL Carter said, however, that there are more imminent stresses that he, as the commander, intends to deal with. "We

are under larger stresses in terms of managed care, a decreasing budget, downsizing of military personnel, the inability to attain adequate hires from the community to supplement those losses and potential reorganization," he said.

These issues, COL Carter said, impact the way the organization operates. During the next few months, COL Carter said he would work to get the budget and personnel issues back on track. "My first priority is to provide some stability for the organization in terms of the budget and personnel resources. These are things we need to obtain in order for the organization to continue its health care mission," he said.

When discussing the current shortage of nurses at Madigan, COL Carter said that many factors, including summer turnover, AT site support and field exercises contributed to the shortage. He said that realignment of active duty nurses within the U.S. Army Medical Department (AMEDD) was the major underlying cause of this problem. "The realignment of nurses within the AMEDD creates a situation in which, in order to maintain our nursing staff, we must hire nurses from the civilian community to replace those active duty nurses who left," he explained. "The problem is that it's expensive, and in this area, nurses are scarce."

As with most organizational challenges, COL Carter stressed that it is going to take time to regain organizational stability. "I

cannot say that it is going away, but what I can say is that we must learn to deal with that day-to-day turbulence, and not say we can't do some things because of what we have going on here," he said.

With the ongoing changes in military medicine, another one of COL Carter's goals is to make sure patients are able to transit Madigan's health care system in an efficient manner. In regards to the TRICARE Senior Prime Program, COL Carter stated that although the program has proven to be more costly than originally expected, it is a good program and he does not expect it to end any time soon. "TRICARE Senior Prime is a continuation of the promise we gave to our soldiers, airmen, marines and sailors that we would take care of them after they retire," he said. "There's a lot of attention in Congress about this issue of what was promised to our retirees and it's unlikely that the program will go away."

Enhancing the relationship Madigan has with Fort Lewis is a readiness issue and must be a top priority. COL Carter said he wants to make it easier for Fort Lewis units to communicate their concerns to Madigan staff members. "We are here to support Fort Lewis. We need to cooperate very closely with Fort Lewis to identify the soldiers who are not ready to deploy, fix them and put them back in a deployable status," he said. "Our goal is to make sure that Fort Lewis has a force that is healthy and ready to deploy."

Nursing Course A Bonus For ROTC Cadets Ending Summer Camp

Sharon D. Ayala, MAMC PAO

As ROTC Advanced Camp 2000 came to a end, some 3,000 cadets prepared to return to their hometowns and eventually back to college. However, for some of the nursing school cadets, staying behind for an additional three weeks to participate in a training program at Madigan Army Medical Center is a wonderful opportunity to sharpen their nursing skills.

The Nurse Summer Training Program is an intensive three-week course. There are two training cycles offered every year. The first cycle was conducted July 13 to Aug. 2, and the second cycle began Aug. 3 and ended Aug. 23. The summer training is a voluntary program offered to cadets who have completed Advanced Camp and are in their junior or senior year of nursing school. Upon graduating from college, the cadets will be commissioned in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps.

Training in a hospital environment provides the cadets with hands-on experience while introducing them to the world of Army nursing. Prior to the start of the program, cadets choose clinical areas where they would like to train. Throughout their training, they are under the supervision of Army Nurse Corps Officers called preceptors.

"We try to match cadets with their clinical choices," said MAJ Penny Moureau, clinical coordinator, Madigan Consolidated Education Department. "It's very

interesting, from year to year to see what their choices are going to be. Last year, many of the cadets wanted the Emergency Department and Critical Care. This year, the cadets want the Labor and Delivery Ward and Mother and Baby Unit."

After spending time working in the Mother/Baby Unit, Cadet Danielle Shoesmith from Scranton, Pa., now knows that she wants to work with babies after graduating from college.

"This training has been wonderful," Shoesmith exclaimed. "I have worked 12 hour days and had the opportunity to rotate through the operating room, labor and delivery and the post-partum wards. I love babies and want to have lots of them," she said.

One of the many benefits of this program, according to Moureau, is that the cadets receive real-life training with Army Nurse Corps officers who are experts in their clinical area.

"This is a very valuable training for the cadets. In nursing school there is usually one instructor for every eight to 10 students. While at Madigan, the cadets receive one-on-one training with Army Nurse Corps officers who are experienced in their field," Moureau said. "If the preceptor works 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., then that's the schedule the cadet will work. We want to expose the cadets to real-life situations," Moureau said.

The real value in the program, according to Moureau, is the preceptors. She said that they volun-

teer to do it because they want to do it. "It gives them an opportunity to reflect back to when they were in school and the chance to share their clinical knowledge," she said. "They spend time with the cadets in a clinical setting and they go above and beyond the call of duty," Moureau explained.

In addition to completing 120 hours of clinical service, cadets must also present an in-service topic and do a project. "Many times, the preceptor will provide guidance to the cadet about different topics to choose from. It's usually a combination of what the cadets are interested in and what the staff members on that floor need," Moureau explained.

Every year, approximately 20 ROTC cadets participate in Madigan's Nurse Summer Training Program. It is very intense, but succeeds in providing nursing school cadets with invaluable experience.

"This program is a great way to introduce soon-to-be Army nurses to military medicine. It's also an opportunity for the cadets to return to their hometowns and tell others about the training and the career and educational opportunities available in the Army Nurse Corps," Moureau said.

